

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : George

FROM : Bob Komer

SUBJECT:

DATE: 11 December 1950

Paper and its conclusions seem vigorous and accurate. Would question only three major points: (a) Whether conclusion No. 2 shouldn't be rephrased (it involves too nice a balancing of effects in Western Europe vs. the probable loss of all Southeast Asia); (b) Shouldn't the snowballing effects of loss of Tonkin alone be given more prominence; and (3) Has the question of UN mediation or some such broader effort been fully examined?

Would suggest omitting Section I. (1) (a) as being wholly artificial and not worth mentioning. Moreover, it is not even mentioned as a possibility in the immediately preceding paragraph.

I. (b) seems oversimplified. Would "direct US intervention" necessarily involve the US in an open war with China? If the UN entered the picture and if the Asian ~~XX~~ countries became more frightened of the Chinese menace (which is implied in your conclusion No. 3), would these Asian countries become estranged? It might not be possible to persuade the UN to support military action, but easing the French out and bringing the UN in might tend to remove the onus of colonialism. Moreover, as the French themselves come to see the inevitability of defeat, won't they be willing to see the burden shifted to the UN? I am not saying that some form of UN mediation offers any great chance of success, but merely that it offers more than the present inevitable defeat; it is at least a hope. Admittedly, a French appeal to UNO would be an admission of surrender, but so what? We want to get the French off the hook. A weak independent Viet-Minh (or Nam) is better than the present situation (a parallel to Burma), and once independent the nationalist conflict of interest between Indochina and China can come into play. Therefore, this section seems too negative.

I. (1) (c) French are giving more than oral consideration to withdrawal from Tonkin. They are actively preparing for it. Do they believe a Chinese "invasion" imminent, or merely greatly increased aid to Ho? (which might be enough)

I. (2) Does 49% of career enlistees include colonials?

I. (3) (a) Analysis of French weaknesses leaves out some important elements. It is not just the inadequacies of French and Vietnam that will defeat them. It is further fact that much of population are "fence sitters" waiting

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to see who will win. Viet Minh seizure of all Tonkin (with or without active Chinese intervention) may be decisive factor which starts the snowball rolling so fast it can't be stopped.

Native scepticism ingrained over 60 years, not four. ~~I. (3) (b).~~

I.(3)(b). Shouldn't you mention Chinese allegations of French border violations as building up case for intervention?

Isn't this section backwards? The third paragraph should precede the second.

III. Nitpick. Indochina-Burma border so inaccessible that doubtful if Ho's forces could exert much pressure on Burma directly. Also question that there is little "India" could do to defend itself". This might be what is needed to plunk India on the side of the West. As for Indonesia, would suggest that question is not so much whether government could control local Communists as whether it, like Thailand, might not seek accommodation, as only realistic course. Suggest some reference to impact on Malaya.

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